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EDITORIAL

AUA + UCA = UUA = IARF?

IT is ironical that the possible consolidation of two religious bodies may result in the creation of a non-religious association. For, IF the proposed plan of consolidation of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America is accepted and passed as presently written by the Joint Merger Commission, then the new Unitarian Universalist Association will be but a secular pan-religions organization.

This observation and judgment is made on the basis of the second principle of purpose as stated in the Constitution. On lines 29-32 of the Proposed Plan is the statement that we unite in seeking "To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized in their essence as love to God and love to man."

Internally considered, this statement says nothing positive and affirmative. It is, however, loaded with assumptions for which no responsibility in clarification is demonstrated. For instance, what are these apparently obvious "universal truths"? If we know some of them, why not have the integrity and the courage to affirm them?

Who are these "great prophets and teachers of humanity"? Do we include the Buddha whose teachings in their essence cannot be "immemorially summarized" as Love to God and man? Certainly, although the Buddha was a great teacher and transformer of Indian culture, he did not teach love to God as these terms have been understood in the Jewish-Christian religious tradition. What will be, then, our criteria for sifting out mutually exclusive propositions?

If it is our belief (credo) that the highest or absolute truth (what else can a summarized essence of universal truths be?) is the injunction to love God and men, then why not espouse and delare the source of this commitment, namely, the Jewish-Christian perspective?

These implicit internal inconsistencies are much too serious to be glibly by-passed with such an absurdly generalized statement of "purpose." Moreover, when the statement is evaluated in terms of the criteria proposed by the Joint Merger Commission, it is found to be even more deficient in meaning. It is especially the first criterion which is most relevant here. Of the eleven suggested criteria, the first asks, does the proposed plan "Express in a maximum way the nature, unique religious ideas of and concepts commonly held by the group, and make it possible to maintain and nourish adequately the traditions of the group as these emerge and mature."

Our Theological Basis

Historically, the unique religious ideas and concepts of Unitarianism and Universalism were of a theological nature; they affirmed heretical doctrines as over against prevailing "orthodox" theological interpretations of the Christian kerygma. The terms "unitarian" and "universalist" are themselves, or were originally, theological concepts. In common, the two denominations share a Christianity in the liberal perspective, albeit, whatever systematic theology they currently have is watered-down Protestantism rather than dynamic, consciously developed heretical doctrine. Two purposes of the AUA, as incorporated in its constitution

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Initiative and Response

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The late Dean Fenn of Harvard Divinity School used to tell of a snatch of heated conversation between two students he once overheard as he passed through the corridor of Andover Hall at the Divinity School. Attempting to bring an argument to a triumphant conclusion, the one student said, "All you have is *mere* morality." To this the other student replied scornfully, "And all you have is *mere* God."

These two epithets, "mere morality" and "mere God," adumbrate two aspects of the religious mentality which, as each of the students from his perspective implied, should never be allowed to stand in simple opposition or separation. These epithets are of course little more than polemical weapons; but they do point to a fundamental and perennial question, that of the relation between fact and value: Are the high values that elicit human commitment merely human or are they more than human in their rootage and sanction?.

The addresses that follow below, addresses given by four recent graduates of Harvard Divinity School, largely center upon that question. These young Unitarian ministers reject any identification of religion with "mere morality" or with "mere God" (a being aloof to the realm of ethical obligation); they reject the simple identification of religion with, and its separation from, character education, self-culture, ethical responsibility, or social reform. In the order of priority they point to the roots rather than the fruits of faith; or, to change the figure, we may say that they insist that religious commitment issues from the declarative into the imperative mood, from recognition of divine Fact that defines and re-defines and sustains value. They agree, I take it, with Baron Friedrich von Huegel's assertion that "religion has primarily to do with is-ness and only secondarily with ought-ness."

What they have in mind is well illustrated by the comment of the British philosopher F. H. Bradley on the claim of Matthew Arnold that "religion is morality touched with emotion." In fairness to Arnold it should be recalled that he went beyond this definition in his description of God as "the power not ourselves working for righteousness." But here is Bradley's comment on the definition of religion just cited:

> "Is there a God?" asks the reader. "O, yes," replies Mr. Arnold, "and I can verify him in experience." "And what is he then?" cries the reader. "Be virtuous and as a rule you will be happy," is the answer. "Well, and God?" "That is God," says Mr. Arnold, "there is no deception and what more do you want?"

Then Bradley goes on to say:

> I suppose we do want a good deal more. Most of us, certainly the public which Mr. Arnold addressed, want something they can worship; and they will not find that in an hypostatized copy-book heading, which is not much more adorable than "Honesty is the best policy," or "Handsome is that handsome does," or various other edifying maxims which have not yet come to an apotheosis.

This pointing beyond "ought-ness" to "is-ness" is characteristic not only of religion. Science is also concerned in the first instance with fact. The scientist as such is not primarily interested in the social change for good which his scientific discoveries will make possible. That interest belongs to the applied sciences. The scientist is primarily concerned to know the truth about the world as he finds it, and he is not as scientist primarily concerned with what he ought to do with or about it. Religion and science in their differing ways seek reliable fact.

Accordingly, religious faith is a response to that which is held to be ultimately reliable. Christian faith finds the ultimately reliable fact is the meaning-giving, sustaining, fellowship-creating, transforming power to which Jesus of Nazareth responded and which is available ("near at hand") in the Kingdom of God. This "object" of faith is neither "mere morality" nor "mere God" if these latter are viewed as opposites or as separated. It is just

because of this that Dean Fenn was fond of telling his story.

II

These papers aim to give Unitarian Christian answers to the question regarding the relation between fact and value, between is-ness and ought-ness. They point to the divine Power manifest in Jesus, as the ultimately reliable reality, and therefore as the ground of a commanding, ultimate loyalty.

In explicating their theological positions these four Unitarian ministers employ theological as well as philosophical language. To some Unitarians the language (as well as the positions taken) will give offense. Revelation; a non-finite, non-contingent reality; the divine initiative; the divine-human encounter; Jesus Christ; a God-man relationship that "smashes the subject-object structure of our knowledge" —some of these terms have not been in widest commonalty used of late among Unitarians. At the same time much of the terminology of these essays is of common parlance. One should recognize, moreover, that the traditionally Christian terminology used is by no means traditional in connotation. It is, if we may say so, demythologized or transmythologized. Nor is this terminology, I take it, assumed to be definitive or to be demanded as a "pious work." Indeed, if the intent of these papers was apologetic rather than confessional, perhaps few of the key theological words here employed would appear. Certainly, the *living* God does not require the language of the Bible (or of German theology). On the other hand, we should recognize that it is a distinct mark of illiberal provincialism and illiteracy to reject or to ignore the language and symbols of the Bible.

The immediate concern of the authors is to testify to a commitment to a living God who has made himself known in history and who continues to make himself known in new ways. Many a reader will want to raise questions about both the testimony and the terminology in which it is couched: Is this testimony Unitarian in character? they may ask. Are the words appropriate among Unitarians? If they are, then how does Unitarianism maintain or achieve its uniqueness in face of the other churches? I cannot claim to speak for the authors of the papers. They should speak for themselves. Moreover, they would probably not give identical answers.

But in response to those who would answer "No" to these questions, I would venture to pose corresponding questions: Do you mean to imply that there is an authoritative norm among Unitarians which excludes this testimony and these words? Do you hold that there is some canon of blessed and cursed words which constitutes Unitarian uniqueness? (If so, one might well call this claim Unitarian "uniquity.") Does not the uniqueness of Unitarianism lie rather in the commitment to maintain dialogue *within* the church itself, rather than to push the objectionable view out of the fold into the wicked "world" or on the other side into the pillory of some so-called, and therefore rejected, "orthodoxy"? And, if you say that the testimony given here or the words used to communicate it will not appeal to the people whom Unitarians should want to attract or hold, do you not risk surrendering to an exceptionally dubious form of orthodoxy, the orthodoxy of the Spirit of the Age? Is that appeal an adequate criterion of truth or of the *free* church?

III

The authors of these papers recognize that Christianity is not "morality touched with emotion." Nor is it, strictly speaking, a mystical religion. It is a prophetic, that is, a historical religion; it summons men to an encounter with, and response to, a living God, the Lord of history, who has "spoken and speaks" to and in history; it points to an initiative that is not of human making and to a response that is concrete and incarnational in the perennial struggle against the forces of evil in man and history. Its mode is existential more than it is discursively argumentative. We should dwell for a moment here on the prophetic sense of urgency with respect to this demand for the concrete.

In a recent poll at Harvard College a substantial proportion of undergraduates, according to *The Harvard Crimson*, "presented a God whose substance is so tenuous and vague that, like certain very rare gases, it becomes highly enigmatic to say that He is 'there' at all. Such a being certainly seems incapable of having much more of an effect on human life than the normal inhalation of argon." This kind of God is no longer a concrete presence. It is the dead end of the alley of pale abstraction. Actually, however, the abstractionist conception of God can

point to a noble, if erstwhile forgotten, heritage. Rational clarity and consistency again and again, in the very name of a God of order, must enter the scene in order to correct the arbitrariness, the naive anthropomorphism, the superstitions, of "faith." On the other hand, this rational thrust can create the vacuum that the writer in the *Crimson* describes. Arguments about the existence of God can end up here. But the vacuum of abstractionism generally does not last. It gets filled with half-gods. Some concrete, commanding power such as the nation, the white pigment, or the flesh pots of suburbia, will project and occupy a throne. A new superstition becomes the object of faith. Thus man shows himself to be incurably, and even self-destructively, "religious."

One can observe in the history of the ancient Hebrew religion this oscillation between devotion to a distant, if universal, God and the demand for something more immediate and concrete. The German philosopher Schelling, recognizing this oscillation in the history of religions, called for a transcending of the *universality* of abstract monotheism and the idolatrous *concreteness* of polytheism. He found this in the New Testament. Martin Buber has frequently commented on the viability and power that the Christian conception of God enjoys by virtue of the centrality of Jesus in Christian devotion.

IV

The Unitarian Christian outlook presented in these four papers is directed to a Power that is living, that is active in a love seeking concrete manifestation, and that finds decisive response in the living posture and gesture of Jesus of Nazareth. In order to lay emphasis on the Fact of the divine initiative and on the Fact of Jesus' responding gesture of faith, they insist that the religion *of* Jesus must be coupled with a religion *about* Jesus (here rejecting Harnack's disjunction of the two aspects of Christian religiousness.)* Accordingly, they speak of Jesus Christ as well as of Jesus the prophet and teacher, though to be sure they present a demythologized or transmythologized Jesus and Christ—a picture, incidentally, which non-Unitarian Christians will be quick to detect and reject. In other words, they ask for a *theological* interpretation of the significance of Jesus. Their formulations here vary in emphasis and perhaps even in substance. One of them, for example, speaks of Jesus Christ as the bearer of God's concern for man; another speaks of Christ as exemplifying the ideal God-man relationship. In this very variety of formulation they recognize that Christian faith is multidimensional and that is by no means lacking in complexity. Thus they speak of the continuing revelation of the mystery of the living God; of the "otherness" of God—the cleavage between the living God and the ideas we may have of Him; of the God-man relationship that is personal, immediate, social, and historical; of the church as the covenanted, healing and sustaining community, and of its social responsibilities. All of these expressions give utterance to a commitment oriented to the Lord of history, a Power that has become concretely manifest in history and that seeks ever new and renewing manifestation in free response. This Power is not a remote, supranatural being alongside or spatially above other beings.

These papers obviously do not claim to offer finality of formulation—the commitment is to a living God who cannot be exhausted or capsuled in formulations or in any other way. Moreover, they do not here explicitly deal with certain important questions that Unitarian Christians (and of course other Unitarians also) would characteristically raise. What is the relation of this Christian faith to Judaism? Is the distinction between Christianity and Judaism to be made so sharply as (and in just the way) it is formulated here? And is it justifiable to say categorically that "we cannot know the historical truth about Jesus"? What is the attitude of the Unitarian Christian faith here adumbrated to non-Christian religions? Or to secularism, and particularly to prophetic secularism? Is the God described—a God active in love—simply non-contingent? No doubt the authors of these papers in important ways disagree with each other in their answers to some of these questions.

But most of these questions cannot even arise before the initial witness set forth is offered.

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* It is puzzling to me, by the way, that one of the papers appears to stress almost exclusively the religion *about* Jesus, on the basis of a radical skepticism regarding the possibility of discerning in the historical record the religion of Jesus and also on the basis of doubt that the ethics of Jesus is significantly unique!

Toward an Understanding of Christian Revelation

Harry M. Stokes

Christianity is a living religion, which means that it is a Faith and a variety of faiths. It has a history embracing many traditions, and is therefore both complex and unified. Christianity expresses itself in the ideal of a universal Church in which all "who profess and call themselves Christians" are members, and yet Christianity is institutionally comprehended by a variety of churches. Christianity as a religion is rooted in history and dependent upon persons and events, but its record is literary. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments witness to a faith of which they are the guardians, and at the same time the product; they are the literary sources, as well as the effects of an enduring testimony incarnate in time and extended over the spaces of the world.

Because Christianity is a living religion it is also a self-contained or autonomous religion, which means that within itself it bears its own criterion of spiritual value and truth, its own court of authority, its own basic revelation and structures of religious meaning. Christianity, like the other living religions of the world, rests on its own credentials. Apart from these it has no relevancy whatsoever except in terms of historical curiosity. A distortion of these credentials or their denial is a distortion and denial of Christianity itself, root, branch and tree. These credentials are the fundamental assumptions, or one might say, the axioms upon which and out of which all Christian thought and life proceed, whether they be implicit and unconscious or explicit and defined. The task of Christian theology is employed in this latter capacity, working from the axioms of Christian Faith to a clearer description of Christian life and the ethics of Christian behavior. But the requirement that is fundamental to this theological task is a commitment within the circle of Christian concern. Outside of this commitment there may exist appreciation, admiration, and even a measure of devotion to Christian ideals, but in order fully to grasp the significance of a religion one must be committed to it. This principle is true, I believe, of the other world religions as well. Within our own Unitarian churches this sense of commitment is expressed in our church covenants.

Christian theology is basically the study and systematic understanding of what it means to be a Christian. It is the application of reason to faith. It stands in relation to the Christian's religious experience in the same way that science is related to scientific experience. Its rules, like those of science, are determined by the data supplied by experience, reason, and the assumptions grounded in faith. The particular complexion of Christian theology, whether one accepts an orthodox, neo-orthodox, heterodox, fundamentalistic, or liberal position, depends on the way one reasons or understands the credentials of the Christian religion. What is basic, however, to all of these positions is the fact that they unite in their testimony to the value of the Christian religion as a living faith in which the real meaning of human existence is disclosed. Their differing interpretations loom rather large and clear-cut for us within a dominantly Christian or post-Christian civilization, but it is important that we remember our unity within the Christian household, even as we continue to discuss and clarify the issues that separate us.

I

The dictionary gives two types of meaning for the word "credential." The first meaning is adjectival, a title or claim to credit and confidence. The second meaning is that of the noun, that which certifies one's authority or claim to confidence. Revelation as a Christian credential carries both meanings. An experience is revelatory, that is, it carries a title or claim to credit and demands of us confidence. But Christian Revelation, taken as a total experience, is an authority in which a claim is made, requiring for its fulfillment our confidence. The Christian claim is that God has disclosed Himself to man in history. This Self-disclosure carries with it the authority of demand. We are confronted. Man has encountered God. The Christian responds to this demand, this encounter, with confidence. This is the meaning

of faith—a trust in the God who has revealed Himself. Revelation is thus an historical occurrence, but writ large in the imperfect tense, for it continues from age to age. In this continuing sense, revelation is a personal experience, a personal occurrence. The claim is renewed in every generation. Each Christian must freely decide for himself whether he will accept the claim made upon him; whether he will affirm God's Self-disclosure. This is the encounter of God with man of which the Scriptures are a witness. Revelation therefore is basic to the Christian's whole religious experience. The question he asks himself is not whether he can prove God's existence, but whether the God whom he has encountered is indeed the true and living God. Revelation is an experience that makes religion possible, and not the rationalization of supernatural possibilities. Revelation has come, is already here, and its claim as well as its demand are inseparable from the Christianity we profess.

The history of revelation is the story of man's encounter with God and the response to that encounter. In the Old and New Testaments we have illustrations and examples of how men have interpreted and understood their encounter with God. The prophets, some willingly and some unwillingly, have met in varying degrees the demands God made upon them. But the demand of God has not been denied. Its authority is ultimate and life-giving. Its denial would be idolatry and spiritual death. This is the first of the commandments: "I am the Lord thy God . . . Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Or as Jesus answered the scribe: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." (Mark xii. 29-30) Revelation is thus not a religious discovery made by the mind of man; it is God's claim upon the whole heart and soul and mind and strength of man.

II

For many Christians today this view may appear very problematical. Revelation no longer seems so clear-cut, so decisive, and rationally discernible. Like so many theological concepts, revelation is similar to an old coin. First mined at Mt. Sinai by the wandering tribes of the ancient Jewish patriarchs, minted into a coin of gold by the spirituality of the prophets, impressed with the image of Christ and his cross by the apostles, and circulated throughout the Greco-Roman world by St. Paul and the martyrs, revelation would seem to have lost its original value by passing through so many hands. But patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, have not debased its value. For man's relationship with God, which is the *concern* of revelation and God's concern for man which is the *content* of revelation, does not lose its value although the theological account of that relationship does change from age to age.

What are some of the characteristics of the Christian experience of God's Self-disclosure? The first characteristic, I believe, is concreteness or particularity. This may be illustrated in St. Paul's description of revelation which he wrote to the Corinthians in his second letter (II Corinthians, iv. 6—Phillips' translation) "God, who first ordered Light to shine in darkness, has flooded our hearts with his Light. We can now enlighten men only because we can give them knowledge of the glory of God as we have seen it in the face of Christ." This "revelatory" break-through of God's Light, for the apostle, was not a universal display of power and majesty; it was rather a single event occurring during a concrete time which carried with it universal importance. For Paul and for the early Christians it was a specific and particular person through whom God had chosen to unveil his *glory*—namely in the life, teachings, activity, and death of one man—Jesus of Nazareth, a religious teacher of Palestine.

This *enlightening* from God, this Self-disclosure, this unveiling of God's nature, this *glory* did not come through rational scrutiny of the physical world, nor did it occur in any contemplation of the beauties of spring-time or penetrating discoveries of man's psychological make-up. It occurred in a human being who was of flesh and blood, who was born, who hungered and thirsted, who knew fear and pain, and who at last died a criminal's death. How, we very well may ask, could this rather ordinary human being constitute the Self-disclosure of God's presence in human history? For this is precisely what our Christian credentials claim: that Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ is the way (the way of coming to know God), the truth (the mystery of God's love and con-

cern for man), and the life (the effect of God's activity in human life and the response of man to God). Pointing beyond himself to God, the specific Jesus of history becomes the Christ of Christian faith, the bearer of God's concern for man.

III

Can such a scandalous assertion be proved? Can it be proved by rational demonstration that the universal God, who is the Ground of existence, was unveiled or revealed in a single human personality? For St. Paul and for the first-century Jewish Christians this was one of the most difficult problems. Arguments from ancient prophecy were tried; the miraculous was explored and attributed to him; even by the time of St. Luke the virgin birth was used. But all of these myths and expedients, so convincing and dear to the heart of Mediterranean man, fail to prove that which brought them into literary existence. The heart of the Christian faith was a scandal then and it remains one today: "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles." What Paul and the early Church preached was not The Nicene Creed or that of the church fathers at Chalcedon, but the simple declaration that in Jesus of Nazareth the one God, who rules heaven and earth, had disclosed His loving concern for men, using the life and death of one man to show forth His power, not in the titanic forces of a hurricane or whirlwind, but in the humility of a servant. This is the heart of the scandal of the Christian Revelation. God has not behaved as He ought to behave. God has not conformed to man's melodramatic expectations. He has in this specific human life done that which was and remains (even for many nominal Christians) the totally unexpected. It is in this sense that Revelation is a break-through, a thrust into the whole fabric of human expectation and religious order.

For this reason Revelation for the Christian has never been a human discovery. Unlike the unknown continent of America before 1492, which was discovered by navigation and compass, this basic credential of Christian Faith would never have been discovered by science or philosophy. It is not the product of ingenuity and technique. Creative intelligence has certainly been brought to bear on this premise of the Christian faith, but in no sense has Revelation been manufactured by man's creative intellect. But does this mean that Christian Revelation is irrational or sub-rational? Does the fact that we worship a living God, and not some abstraction of our own conceiving, subvert the reasonableness of the Christian religion?

IV

The answer to this question depends on whether we conceive of religion as one ideology among others or whether we take seriously its claim to be the ultimate concern of man. Do we believe that God is God, and not in the last analysis a projection of our own personalities thrust upon the cosmic screen? This is the crux of the problem of revelation.

In a class of high school students one Sunday two years ago we were discussing the fundamental meaning of religion. One boy suggested that religion is man's search for God. Another boy wondered why we should go searching for God. Certainly, he argued, after so many thousands of years if God hadn't been discovered yet, the whole business might be rather far-fetched and pointless. It was then that the Christian qualification of religion took meaning. For a third boy replied that possibly the difference between religion in general and Christianity in particular is in this very point. In Christianity we have found the God for whom we are searching. Our search is not for "an unknown God" but for the God whom we encounter in worship and prayer. At this point the moment of revelation occurred. We are in search because we do know Him in whom the search must end; we love one another because we are first loved. We forgive one another because we are forgiven. We have faith and hope because we believe that God has not left Himself without witness in our midst.

Revelation then is mysterious, but not because it is irrational or sub-rational—but rather because it discloses something of the Mystery of God Himself. It is enlightening because it points to the depths of reason. It is challenging because it meets us in our human situation without destroying our humanity. It is fulfilling because it points beyond us wherever we are, and yet enables us to live and move

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Towards A Christian Understanding of God

Victor H. Carpenter, Jr.

Long before we reached the age of reason, we *inherited* an understanding of God. I say *inherited* since this understanding was not the product of our own inquiry or discovery; rather, we accepted it on the authority of our Sunday School teacher, parent, or sophisticated friend. In other words, we accepted the understanding of God from anyone whom we authorized as knowledgeable in such matters; and by our acceptance of the authority, we *inherited* the knowledge which that authority offered concerning God.

Upon reaching the age of reason, our *inherited* knowledge of God may have been amplified and buttressed by our knowledge of the various proofs of His existence; and our acquaintance with such theological giants as Origen, Aquinas, and Hooker may have served us well in building our own rational foundation upon which to place our *inherited* God. On the other hand, the discoveries of science and the attacks of modern philosophy may have prompted us to reject our understanding of God—to focus our reason on what we considered more meaningful areas of life.

The understanding of God which we inherited —the ideas that reason taught us either to buttress or blaspheme—was probably the understanding that popular Christian theology seems to foster. God was understood as the far-off, self-involved, abstractly perfect, and essentially blessed God of pure Monotheism. This is the God conceived of as a pre-existent, self-centered person, living in his untroubled eternity; the God to whom the idea of creation occurs as something of an afterthought. The afterthought is put into execution; the world is created; a universe is summoned into existence and stands somehow *there*, very much as a shape or a figure might appear at a sorcerer's word of command. The act of creation is an incident in God's existence, and the product stands independently outside of Him and goes by itself; thus, God's relation to the subsequent unfolding of the Cosmic Drama is, at most, that of an interested spectator. Such an understanding of God, an understanding that reckons God as remote and separate from creation, can hardly attribute the quality of *living* to Him. Living implies involvement; it implies participation; it implies a relationship.

I

Martin Buber, in his little book *I and Thou* speaks of "real living" as "meeting." This simple phrase, "All real living is meeting," provides us with a penetrating insight for the understanding of God. To say that God is "the living God" is not to say that He lives untouched and isolated in his eternity—to live untouched is a contradiction in terms. To say that God is "the living God" *is* to say that God and men are in a living relationship—a relationship that smashes the *subject-object* structure of our knowledge —a relationship in which the subject's being is broken in upon by that which at once is *totally other* from it and at the same time is present to it. Real living, for either man or God, is experienced in this realm of meeting as opposed to the realm of knowing. It has been said that knowledge is an autopsy on the corpse of real living. In real living—in the situation of meeting—both sides actively participate. In knowing, only one side is active—the object is passive, inert, dead. The object of my inquiry may be present as, for instance, when the word *God* (appearing on a printed page) is present to my sight and my understanding; but in such a situation my being is not *in the presence of* God. During my inquiry toward an understanding of Him, the living God is, of course, not present; rather, He is represented passively. I can dispose of such a passive representation, simply by closing the book. However, in *real living* the circle of my being is broken into by something really there on its own account . . . something that is there and is modifying my being by bringing me into a relationship with its own being.

There are few things that are more emphasized in the Old Testament than the truth that God is a living God. Most of the so-called anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament pictures of God are expressions of His character as living. Over and over again, God "meets"

His people. His actions, passions—all His emotional involvements with Israel—are expressions of His "living," expressions of His breaking through the subject-object structure, expressions of Israel's being brought into His living presence.

God is the one subject beyond all predicates, the subject that is never object. Beyond all objectification, God is the subject, the source and the agent of all that is. Small wonder that knowledge, with its implicit subject-object structure, serves more to obscure than to clarify our understanding of God. Man, utilizing knowledge to examine and declare the variety of objects with which he comes into contact, is stymied at the point of examining and declaring God. A medieval German mystic summed up the situation in a short rhyme:

> "Whatever idea you mind comes at
> I tell you flat, God is not that."

The living God as object, the living God as the "idea your mind comes at," is a contradiction in terms. Any such understanding of God would, in fact, cancel out the living God, as we have come to understand the meaning of *living*; to say that God is the one subject beyond all predicates is to say that He is other than any predicate.

This *otherness* of God, signifying the cleavage between the living God and the ideas of God that our reason may promote, has become something of a slogan in modern theological thinking. As such it beckons to a misleading over-simplification. God's otherness does not refer to any unbridgeable gulf between ourselves and Himself. God's otherness refers simply to the futility of our attempts to know Him objectively, to know Him as He is in Himself. God's otherness does not affect our ability to know Him subjectively—to know Him as the living God—the God of the subjective *meeting*... We gain an understanding of God by His action and effect upon us; our very addressability is a fact of His appointing. To say that we love because He first loves us, is to say that our understanding of God results from the initiative that God makes possible. Indeed, His effect upon us *is* our response. In the *Epistle to the Romans,* Paul insists that all is of God. He is here drawing upon the meaning of Jesus's words to Peter, "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven." As often as Jesus ends his teaching with the words, "he that hath ears, let him hear," he proclaims that the problem of Reason and Revelation is not a riddle for man's intellect, but a demand upon man's will by God. A demand upon man to forego his inherited knowledge of God if that knowledge is idolatrous, if it obscures man from meeting the living God, if it obscures man from making the discovery that God, as creator and preserver, is *ever* initiating. Creation, as shown in its most characteristic and demonstrable guise of evolution, is a process not an act; creation is continuous, not complete. Thus, if we assert that the creator is *the living God,* we are asserting that He is the eternal subject in which life is eternally meeting and realizing itself.

II

The living God who is ever *meeting* us in the reality of life is, and must remain, veiled in mystery for us. This overwhelming hiddenness of God must never be dismissed, even as we are caught up in the discovery of His self-disclosure. In our meeting with God, the depth of His mystery is in no way lessened; He remains totally other. In our meeting with Him (the situation that has been described as "the encounter" or "the confrontation") the individual is grasped by the depth and darkness of Divinity which is never comprehensible, never clearly definable, never comfortably familiar.

The living awareness of God stands in distinction from the abstract arguments about God. While the traditional proofs and explanations of God possess considerable intelligibility, that intelligibility is *ex post facto.* God does not live in explanations or proofs. Proofs and explanations follow the experiential meeting of the living God with living men. One such man, the Quaker George Fox, has noted in his journal of what happened to him in Nottinghamshire in 1648:

> ". . . and one morning as I was sitting by the fire a great cloud came over me and a temptation beset me; but I sate still . . .
> And as I sate still under it . . . a living hope arose in me and a true voice which said: "There is a living God who made all things."

A Unitarian Understanding of Christ

Carl R. Scovel

If I have a theme for my remarks this evening it is from an article which Frederick May Eliot wrote for the *Register* two years ago: "I know so little of God, but what I do know I have seen in the face of Christ, and that is enough for the journey."

Many Unitarians, I find, do not like the word Christ. They prefer to speak about Jesus, and the phrase we hear most commonly is, "We believe in the religion *of* Jesus, not the religion *about* Jesus." They mean, I think, that they do not subscribe to the creeds that have grown up through Christian history. They would believe, it would seem, in the words of Jesus, as they are found in the gospels. But here we must ask just which words of Jesus' they do believe in.

I

Generally, they speak about the ethical and moral teachings, as found, e.g., in the Sermon on the Mount. But are we going to take these teachings seriously? How can we give all we have to the poor, love our enemies, or ever be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect? Obviously we can't. These demands are too stringent, too exalted, too high for mortals. The teachings of Jesus give us no easy rule of thumb for daily morality.

Secondly, these teachings are not unique to Jesus. Almost all of his moral and ethical instructions can be found in the Old Testament, in current rabbinical sources, or in the sacred writ of other religions. These are not necessarily only the teachings of Jesus. They are also the teachings of Isaiah, of Hillel, or of Buddha.

And thirdly, nobody really knows what the religion *of* Jesus was. Only the Palestinians who heard him speak, could know directly his real religion. What we have are reports of Jesus' sayings and doings which were collected in an oral tradition for some twenty years, written down, and finally compiled as the gospels which we have today. The early church and the writers who did this work, could hardly present a dispassionate and objective picture of Jesus. They were aflame with zeal and faith. They knew this man as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And it is only through this community that we know anything about Jesus at all. I do not think we get a more objective, or historical, picture of Jesus by abstracting the moral and the rationally palatable incidents from these essentially inspired works. All we know *of* Jesus comes through the church which propounded the religion *about* Jesus.

And since we cannot know the historical truth *about* Jesus, the task falls upon us as liberals, as upon all others, to interpret the significance *of* Jesus. Now this interpretation of the life of Jesus is commonly called Christology. And to evaluate this man, I submit, we must see him in terms of the title the early church gave him —that of the Christ. In other words, we must be consistent with our sources even though we may not agree with them.

But if I am to use the word Christ, I must be careful to point out to you what it does not mean, and ask you to expunge from your mind all these emotionally-laden associations with the word. Although we usually hear the word from fundamentalists, from evangelists, both flashy and pedestrian, and from dogmatic priesthoods, the word Christ in its root—etymologically—has nothing to do with any of these three types of people. Christ, like any religious reality, can be understood only in freedom. Only as a Unitarian, could I appreciate Christ.

II

The word Christ, is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word Messiah, both meaning *the anointed one,* to wit, the king. Ever since the Jews had been subjected to Greek and then Roman rule, they had hoped for *a king* who would conquer these godless rulers and establish Israel as the chief among all nations. The rebellion of the Maccabees offered the Jews a glimmer of hope, but this was soon subdued. And when there seemed little chance of earthly deliverance, they sang and wrote about an angel, the Son of man, who would descend from heaven

amidst the fiery apocalypse of the Day of Judgment, and defend them against their oppressors. This is what they hoped for in their Messiah.

It is easy to see that *in no way* did Jesus fulfil these Jewish expectations. Although he worked miracles, he never made a direct claim to being this angelic Son of Man. Nor did he attempt to seize political power. He continually renounced it. In what sense, then, was Jesus the Christ.

We call Jesus the Christ because in him we see the ideal relationship between God and man. He redefined the word by his very life. He translated a utopian hope for a future deliverer into a present concern about one's right relationship with God. We might describe Jesus' religion as religion of openness—openness to the will of God. He pointed beyond himself to God. Listen to his words: "I have come to do the will of him who sent me." "Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" "Why callest thou me good? Call none good except your Father which is in heaven."

He saw his whole life and purpose as fulfilling the will of God. He abandoned the comforts of a home, a town, and a secure livelihood because he felt greater security in doing his Father's will. For he saw himself as possessing a special vocation. He was the one to usher in the Kingdom of God. It was his duty to announce it and to convince people to change their lives. In Mark, his first words are: "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (i.e., the good news).

In what way, we might ask, was Jesus unique? We have already suggested that his teachings are paralleled by other teachers and other scriptures. Nor can we say that Jesus was unique in what he revealed about God. Isaiah and the psalmists had sung of God the Father. Amos had preached the forgiveness of a loving God. And Israel had almost known God as the Saviour and Redeemer. Nor can I, myself, hold that Christ was unique in that he was full Godhead fully revealed.

But Jesus was unique as the Christ, in his *relationship* to God, in the encounter between the human and the divine, in the meeting between the finite and infinite. In this relationship the reality of God becomes real. When God is up in his heaven watching the universe spin and man is struggling down on earth, they have nothing to do with one another; there is no vital religion. Religion takes place where the human and the divine dimensions of life meet. Again, religion is the response of man to the questions of life. Being responsible means that man has to respond, he has to answer to God—not only with words, but also with his life. In Jesus, as the Christ, I see this unique, this intimate, this ideal and all-directing relationship between man and God. Unitarianism should consider seriously this Christ-like relationship. For many years it has witnessed the struggle between the camps of humanism and theism—one side preaching the worth of man, and the other preaching the power of God. Each side has its truth, a truth that becomes fully true only when joined with the other. Man and God are realities which need each other; they are concepts which imply each other. What they need is to be asserted in one proposition and joined in one person. That person and that proposition is the Christ—the ideal God-man relationship.

III

What are the main characteristics of this relationship? I list five.

1. It is *personal.* It involves the whole personality of man—not just his mind, nor his emotions only; but his whole being—brains, body and feelings—himself as a person. For Jesus this means knowing God through the symbol of the Father, yet one who is more close and true to him than any earthly relative (how little his own trusted him). How many times he addresses God as Father, and, like a child, relies on his truth. It is a personal relationship.

2. It is an *immediate* relationship. No longer does man pine for the utopia, the never-never land, the brave new world that never materializes. What is important is his relationship with God right now—not yesterday, or tomorrow—but this day and this instant. This immediacy banishes a dreamy past and a dreamy future; the present is real, and God if He is to be real at all must be real in the present. For Jesus this meant that the history of his time was all-important, that God was doing great things among men and nations at that very time. The kingdom of God, he said, is at hand, the time is fulfilled. So repent immediately.

3. This relationship between man and God takes place in a *social* context and implies *social* responsibilities. Jesus does not devote himself to a self-satisfying, monastic life walking on

quiet mountains and by undisturbed lakes. True he is alone at times, but the great acts of his religious life take place also in the midst of men, amid crowds, with the sick and the lame, the halt and the blind, the proud and the humble, the spendthrifts and the misers, the devout and the profane, soldiers, fishermen, merchants, priests, traders, serving girls, housewives—*hoi polloi.* His religion becomes real in a community. As a reviewer said of one of J. D. Salinger's characters in a novel, and this is true of the Christ also, " . . . the highest standard of performance which a man's own understanding can set for himself, must ultimately be embodied—however mystically—in the ordinary, suffering members of the community of his fellows." Jesus' relationship to God became real amidst the ordinary suffering community of his fellows—and never more so than when he partook of the greatest suffering. Religion takes place in a social context.

4. This Christ-like relationship took place in *history*—it was real—in a man, as the full revelation of the brave and compassionate life which a man can live with his God. This is no pale wash of divinity spread out over all persons and all times and all places until it is spread so thinly that it hardly exists. It is real in one man—dramatized for all men, though may I assure you that for me this hardly exhausts divinity.

5. It is a *human* relationship. I think we find it hard to believe that Jesus actually hungered, thirsted, grew tired, was angry, was anxious and fearful, that he worked, that he walked this lonesome valley without anyone else to walk it for him—just as we must. He was one of us, one of the many. Contrast this with the philosophical ideal. In a Great Books discussion recently we were talking about the brave death of Socrates. Said one person, "He's above average . . . His message is not for most of us. We would like to think that we could do it, but we are like the many . . ." Socrates is too good to be true. Compare this with the humanity of Jesus in his death. "Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from my lips" and "O God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This is real despair. I can believe this, but because I have a whole picture, I can believe his courage too. His relationship to God was a human relationship.

IV

The logical question at this point is "So what?" This is a nice bit of religious theory, but if the fact that Jesus was the Christ is just a religious heirloom, then let's stow it away in the attic with the mothballs and forget it. It has importance only as it bears on us today, and it does. For people understand Christ only as they understand themselves; he is, if you will, the ideal type in a doctrine of man. The dogmatist sees Godhead fully revealed for all time. The humanist sees a great humanitarian and teacher. And I see the Christ, the ideal God-man relationship, perhaps, because that is what I aspire towards and because it has proved true and satisfactory to me in my own inadequate experience. It works the other way, too, however. I find this relationship possible and satisfactory, because I have witnessed it in Jesus as the Christ. When you see someone made of the same human stuff as yourself do something, it becomes possible for you to do this also, though it may never have occurred to you before. This is what discipleship means. You follow in a way. I am not sure whether you follow the person or the path he points out. Perhaps the two are one, as Theodore Parker suggests in his hymn, "Yes, thou'rt still the light, thou art the way."

The imitation of Christ is an obligation laid upon all those who would call themselves Christian. But even though we may fail, we have the obligation to do this in a religious sense—in openness to God. This does not mean apathy and self-negation. On the contrary it means being positive and active; it means using all the resources God has given us; it means being sensitive and having the understanding and compassionate heart; it means being open most of all to all the divine possibilities in our lives. And it is the serious and joyful task of the church to carry forward the possibility of this Christ-like, this divine-human encounter, wherein we may gain that knowledge of God and a purpose for life which shall be enough for our earthly journey.

Man And The Church

Harry H. Hoehler

Implied in the talks you have heard this evening are certain metaphysical-theological assumptions concerning the nature of man which, regardless of the language used to denote them, are indispensable to a Unitarian Christian's view of the meaning of the church. These assumptions are at best minimal, and certainly in no way do they exhaust what any of the speakers here would have to say about what constitutes either man or the church; but they do provide us, I think, with the foundation stones, the rock-bottom conditions, upon which a comprehensive, systematic doctrine of the church can be built. In the way of summation to tonight's endeavors, let us examine, first, the character of these assumptions and then sketch, as briefly as possible, what they mean in terms of the Christian Church.

I

First of all, one could not have listened to the papers presented here without being struck by the emphasis, implicit if not explicit, upon the finite nature of man. Now, by finitude I am not referring to man in his space-time relationships but rather to the notion that man is a dependent being who is not responsible for his emergence into his world, nor for his maintenance in it (except in a secondary sense), nor for his final passing from it (except, again, in a secondary sense). As the medieval theologians would remind us, there is "nothing necessary" about man. He could just as well not be as be; and the fact that he *is* at all rests upon causes and processes that lie outside him. Like the rest of the creatures that make up the physical world, man, in spite of his peculiar freedom, in spite of his ability to reshape partially the created order in which he lives, is himself still a product of that creation and therefore a dependent creature. This recognition of the finite structure of human existence is the first major assumption undergirding the presentations you have just heard, and, in corollary fashion, it leads to what I would call our second basic assumption.

I believe it is safe to say that all our speakers would contend that while some of man's potentialities are realizable through his relationship with other finite creatures, still ultimately his life makes sense only in terms of a reality that is non-finite, non-contingent—a creative, fulfilling, sustaining reality, not of his own making, which is dependable, reliable, and above all vitally real. Now this second assumption is not rooted in some rationalistic, deductive argument for a Necessary First Cause, as suggestive as such an argument is; rather, it finds its support in an interpretation of human experience, common to most of the world's great religions, which says that the creative power which stands behind life, which surges through it, challenging it and transforming it, is, at least in part, knowable and understandable. Whatever theory of revelation you subscribe to, it will have this much in common with all other theories: the acknowledgment that there exists a meeting ground, an area of encounter in the depths of human experience between the finite and the infinite, between the dependent and the dependable, between your center of value and the ground of all value, which judges you, requires of you commitment, and in return offers you meaning, fulfillment, wholeness. This encounter, regardless of the specific symbols used to explicate it, is the root experience of the religious life and, as such, has served as the basis for the affirmation which religious men have made, in some form or other, down through the centuries: namely, that the ultimate meaning of life is to found in the creative interchange with an all-embracing reality not of our own making. It is this affirmation which expresses what the God-man relationship is and which, in the final analysis, separates the acknowledged theist from the acknowledged humanist.

But what of this encounter? How do we best describe its content? It is at this point, as we try to interpret for ourselves what it means to be confronted by ultimate reality in the form of a sustaining and saving power, as we grope for the proper word-symbols to clarify what the primary religious experience is all about, that that which Christians have called the Revela-

tion of God in Jesus Christ becomes enormously important for those of us brought up under the influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition. For it is one thing to be able to talk about being touched by a creative power not ourselves or even to predicate to it those personal symbols which most accurately emphasize the profound personal character of the God-man confrontation (as Buber does when he refers to the "I" meeting the "Eternal Thou"), but how much more meaningful it is to be able to point to a concrete life and say, "There—that's what it means to meet creative reality in its fulness; that's what it means to open oneself to God's saving presence." What we are saying is that when we submit ourselves to the saving and transforming qualities which existence at its heart possesses, we best describe what it is we experience by pointing to the life, work, and death of Jesus of Nazareth. But at this point let us be clear about what makes Jesus relevant. It is not the world view he held, nor solely what he taught, nor certainly what the later creed-makers made of him that is of prime importance to the salvation of mankind; rather, it is his total life of commitment to the will of his Father that is of significance to us, regardless of the fact that his interpretation of what constituted that will was subject to all the cultural limitations of his particular human situation. For what Jesus is telling the world by the climate of his life is that there is *in fact* an ultimate, constructive reality behind life whose presence will meet us in the depths of our being, offering us completion and fulfillment, if we but yield, as he did, to its workings. And, of course, it is this claim—that God and man actually do meet, that the divine-human encounter is vividly real—that has been and still is the heart and soul of what might properly be called Unitarian Christianity. Probably no words out of our own past sum up more succinctly the meaning of the Christian faith than those words of Theodore Parker spoken in South Boston some one hundred and eighteen years ago: "The end of Christianity seems to be to make all men one with God as Christ was one with him; to bring them to such a state of obedience and goodness that we shall think divine thoughts and feel divine sentiments, and so keep the law of God by living a life of truth and love."

II.

Now if we assert this much—that "the end of Christianity seems to be to make all men one with God as Christ was one with him"—then we must think in terms of community and specifically the community of the church; for man is a creature whose meaning and fulfillment must be seen in light of his total relationships. He is a social animal; and if the encounter between man and the ultimate ground of his life is to mean anything at all, if it is to be truly ultimate, truly all-embracing, then it must meet him in all his relationships, at every level of his existence. This requires, as one aspect of our human response to the divine confrontation, the establishment of human structures and organizations through which life's transforming and healing power can be channeled. It requires, in the words of James Luther Adams, "the organization of power" as well as "the power of organization." And specifically it requires the church; for, in spite of its weaknesses, sins, and failures, no more significant channel of the constructive realities of life have men devised.

What is the church? Ideally, the church stands as the one free, voluntary community in which men recognize *in a total sense* the content of their common judgment and responsibilities under the infinite, creative, transforming reality. In traditional terms, it is the *covenant community* in which men consciously seek to open their hearts and minds, as Jesus did, first to the divine presence and then to those life-fulfilling promises and requirements God sets before them.

It is a *sharing* and *interpreting* community in which men, seeking to make relevant for their cultural and temporal situation what the Lord requires of them, examine, interpret and test against the insights of a common tradition as well as against the personal insights of each other the meaning of their covenant with the Lord.

It is also a *conserving* and *prophetic* community. As a conserving community it provides the seeker with a body of truth-pointing symbols and myths, a history, a framework of related meaning, in which he can obtain a foothold in his quest for ultimate significance. Yet only as this conserving function of the church is viewed in light of its prophetic mission, its constant tension with both past and present, will the best of the past and present be preserved. For while the church remains bound by finite, cultural symbols and dependent upon the world for its order and form, it also receives

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are: to "Diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of religion which Jesus taught as love to God and love to man" and, to "Strengthen the churches and fellowships which unite in the Association for more and better work for the Kingdom of God." The Universalist "Avowal of Faith" is even more articulate concerning its Christian heritage. It maintains that, "The Bond of Fellowship in this church shall be a common purpose to do the will of God as Jesus revealed it and to cooperate in establishing the Kingdom for which he lived and died." In short, both denominations represent themselves as being theocentric (Kingdom of God) and specific as to choice of which great prophet and teacher of humanity is to be their source of inspiration (Christocentric?). Granted, neither of these denominational statements of purpose is to be taken as an imposition of a creedal test. As long as one is a "liberal," i.e., he is loud about his unconventional disbeliefs, he has a respectable camping ground for his ideological edifice in Unitarianism or Universalism. Too, the theological, philosophical, and attitudinal characters of these denominations have been changing in courses which have yet to be charted. Therefore, the above official statements of purpose may not be the most adequate representation of each group as it is currently composed.

Taking Tradition Seriously

Nevertheless, although the newly proposed statement certainly expresses the maximum of religious orientation, and although it could nourish the traditions of the groups as they MAY emerge and mature, it is still questionable whether it adequately maintains and nourishes the traditions as they HAVE BEEN, and yet remain. It would seem a dangerous move for the consolidation to jump such a gap in traditional heritage. Universal truths, great prophets in every tradition, and the great platitude of love to God and man; all these reified abstractions are much too flimsy and nebulous to serve as a new, solid foundation for living religious movements which still greatly esteem the Christian perspective. Indeed, in the radical eclecticism of the new proposed statement, there is no theological position or religious life possible. For theology implies reasoned conceptual coherence, and, at the very least, this means that all theological-philosophical propositions from all ages and traditions, cannot all be accepted at one and the same time—unless of course, it is first established that all the tenets of the world's religions are systematically compatible. And, the worship life of any particular society becomes fossilized unless it is culturally sustained by historical concreteness and mythological dynamism.

The IARF Pattern Warrants Consideration

On the other hand, it is conceivable that this non-theological secular type of association can be an interesting experiment, and, possibly, an improvement of the *status quo*. With different groups holding the primacy of different prophets and valuing complexes of different doctrines, the Unitarian Universalist Association would become a clearing house for all non-dogmatic religions, something akin to a more cohesive IARF. This situation will serve to free the present theological complexes within Unitarianism and Universalism, e.g., Unitarian Christianity, non-Christian Theism, and non-theistic Humanism, thus allowing them to merge, develop, and to flourish their views in a serious, disciplined manner, yet within a larger unit of cooperative, communicative, tolerant fellowship. And this could be a constructive development, for each could develop more vigorously, adding to the stimulation of the theological enterprise, without being burdened by the anxious and guilty feelings that they were trying to force their respective denominations into their own image. It would certainly, or most probably, relieve the present tension of mutual accusations of "dogmatism," "creedalism," "radicalism," etc., thus realizing this energy for more constructive purposes. Quite possibly, this creation of a new non-denominational association could usher in an era of vigorous liberal influence in the West, for it could challenge and stimulate "orthodoxy" on several fronts at once, and yet demonstrate the best of liberal ecumenicity. (By "liberal" I primarily mean non-dogmatic, though not necessarily non-creedal, religious perspectives.)

There yet remain, however, negative factors and dangers in this kind of arrangement. For it must be recognized that the now freed theo-

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its ultimate meaning and vitality from beyond the finite. If it remains faithful to its ultimate purpose, which is to bear witness to the ever continuing, creative, transforming power of God, then new truth can never be blocked nor will revelation ever be sealed.

Finally, the church is a *healing* and *sustaining* community. When true to its witness, it offers to all who turn to its message communion with the ultimate ground of being, which alone can sustain and keep us whole against the misfortunes of a transitory world. Such is the peace God offers us, not a peace that avoids the ambiguities of the human predicament but the peace that comes from meeting our existence head-on through committing ourselves to the infinite reality and letting that reality govern our lives.

Naturally, it must be stressed that in its practices the church has fallen short of its objectives. Down through history, its scandal has been its refusal often to deal with ultimate questions and ultimate answers as well as its failure to translate into the life of the world what our obligation to the God of our life is. But its sins should not blot from our vision what the church can still be if we but yield, as Jesus so dramatically did in his life and death, to that all-embracing, creative, transforming reality that makes for wholeness, order, and purpose in this fragmentary world of ours.

Initiative

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And that initial witness is what gives significance to these papers. In a world that has with some conscientiousness turned against this particular kind of witness and its vocabulary, the effect of the witness, as with the witness of any of us, will in a special way depend upon the quality of its costingness in concrete action and upon its relevance to the history that is in the making. To say this is only to say that the truly reliable God is the Lord of *history* and also that our sins will find us out. Yet, this Lord of history has given us a world in which the possibility of new beginnings is ever present along with the judgment that is always upon us. To this Lord of history Jesus responded with his message and demonstration of hope in concert with sacrifice.

Introducing Our Contributors

James Luther Adams, Ph.D., is a well-known author and lecturer. A graduate of the University of Minnesota, Harvard University, and the University of Chicago, he has served churches in Salem and Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts and was for thirteen years a member of the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago. Since 1957 he has been Edward Mallinckrodt, Jr., Professor of Divinty in Harvard University.

Victor Howard Carpenter, Jr., is minister of The First Parish Church in Norwell, Massachusetts. He is a graduate of Boston University and the Harvard Divinity School. Before going to Norwell he was minister of Christ Church, Dorchester.

Harry H. Hoehler served as assistant minister of the First Parish and Church in Cambridge and the First Congregational Parish in Milton, Massachusetts before he was called as minister of the First Parish in Beverly last year. He is a graduate of Haverford College and the Harvard Divinity School.

Ronald Michael Mazur has written our guest Editorial for this number of *The Unitarian Christian.* He is minister of the First Parish Church, Unitarian, of Stow, Massachusetts. His student work was done in the Cambridge and West Roxbury Unitarian Churches. He is a graduate of Boston University and the Harvard Divinity School.

Carl Robert Scovel is minister of The First Parish in Sudbury, Massachusetts. A graduate of Oberlin College and the Harvard Divinity School, Mr. Scovel has contributed before to this journal.

Harry Murray Stokes holds degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and the Harvard Divinity School. He is presently Director of Religious Education in King's Chapel, Boston. He has written before for *The Unitarian Christian.*

Toward

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and have our being in One whom to know is to love, and whom to love is to serve, and in whose service there is perfect freedom. In short, Revelation, we believe, is that Self-disclosure of the One God who meets us in the life of Christ, and to whom we are able to respond in faith and love. This is the first credential of a living and liberal faith which enables us to love God and man in the religion personified by Jesus Christ.

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logical complexes would tend toward the formation of new splinter denominations. Also, there is an anomaly in this pan-religions association qualifying itself with the names Unitarian Universalist, unless it be clearly admitted that these are merely sentimental hangovers from the beneficent past.

In any case, it will be interesting to see what develops at Syracuse.

RONALD M. MAZUR

Unitarian Christian Affirmations

The following statements which emerged from a group of Unitarian students at the Harvard Divinity School have been discussed among Unitarians here and in Great Britain. They are printed here for the benefit of our readers who have not yet seen them.—Ed.

Christian Understanding of God

1. Unitarian Christianity, in faithfulness to the broad tradition of catholic Christianity in which it was nurtured, and in whose behalf it has striven, and which from its first foundation it has served, affirms its free and rational commitment to that revelation of the meaning of God, which is manifested and symbolized in Jesus Christ, His life, work, teachings, passion, and death, as this life has been set forth in the New Testament, and as it was symbolized in that resurrection-experience to which the Church bears witness.

The Dignity of Man

2. Unitarian Christianity affirms that Christian understanding of man which recognizes man as a free and sacred personality, endowed with conscience, reason, and emotions, and capable in the liberty of his will either of accepting the grace of God and fulfilling himself in fellowship with God, or destroying himself in alienation from God. But God, we acknowledge, as the Lord of Life is alone the judge of existence, and in His providence alone lies man's ultimate destiny, subject neither to the decision of the Church nor any other human institution.

Freedom of the Spirit

3. Unitarian Christianity affirms as its prime duty, and its place in the historical development of institutional Christianity, the delicate task of preserving freedom of the spirit within the Christian community, and recognizes the legitimate claims of a plurality of religious interpretations and their expressions within the essential unity and corporate life of the Church.

4. Unitarian Christianity affirms the value and the necessity of the Christian congregation, gathered together by voluntary covenant, wherein God is worshipped, and men are united in the bonds of faith, hope, and love; this union being understood as the redeeming presence of the Spirit of Christ in the world through the agency of the Church.

Christian Liberty and Intellectual Integrity

5. Unitarian Christianity in its defence of Christian liberty seeks to interpret the Christian message in the context of both time and place, and, therefore refuses to endorse as final and sufficient any particular creed of the historical Church, which being relative to the conditions of an historical situation has been, is now, or may be in times to come, superceded. Thus Unitarian Christians refuse to bind future ages to a creed expressive of this time, as they through the wisdom of their forbears have been raised in freedom to discover Christian truth anew in this age.

Social Action and the Ethic of Love

6. Unitarian Christianity affirms through social action the ethical values inherent in the Christian gospel, and ever attempts to relate that gospel to all spheres of human thought and existence.

Universal Religious Tolerance

7. Unitarian Christianity, while insisting upon the basic value and integrity of the Christian message as a power of redemption, seeks to promote an understanding and appreciation of religious traditions other than those within the Christian heritage, and thus actively espouses all truly ecumenical efforts to draw men together in love, mutual respect, peace, and goodwill.

A Prayer For Morning

Father in Heaven, brightness and beauty bathe my world and transfigure all things into forms of loveliness. My heart within craves the same purification, and turns to thee with supplication for thy sunlight upon my inner landscape. Thou seest the anxious cares that thicken about me. The morning brings me its heavy assignment of tasks, and my spirit questions its ability to perfom all that must be done. My conscience leaves men no rest, but urges me forth into clamoring drudgeries that brook no neglect. May I find in the thought of thy sovereignty a magic that shall touch these drudgeries and change them into occasions of joy.

Teach me to account myself and my little labor of less importance. Teach me more dependence upon thee and less upon my own halting wisdom and industry. Give me thy commandment of serenity. Bid me still and know that thou art God. Take part with me against the feverish and frowning aspect of self, with its over-conscientiousness, its blasphemy of self-dependence, its forgetfulness of thee. Give me the comfortable assurance that what I do with my hands is not so important as the prayer I harbor in my heart, and the tranquility of trust I know in my soul. Let this be the sunshine that penetrates my spirit at this morning hour—warm and bright and pure. And in its light let me find a truer sense of relative values, and with a wiser choice give myself this day and every day to the quiet, trustful, joyous, Christlike ways of living that are most acceptable unto thee, and most profitable unto my fellow-men.

UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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Enclosed is $3. Please enroll me as a member of the Fellowship and send me the Unitarian Christian for one year.

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